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PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY

A N N U A L R E P O R T

of the

Acting Medical Officer of Health

for

1951

including

Report of the Port Sanitary Inspector

by

Joan Mackenzie, M.B. Ch.B., B.Sc.

MALDON PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY.

Comprising the Borough of Maldon, Maldon Rural District,
West Mersea Urban District and Lexden and Winstree Rural District.

His Worship the Mayor, Alderman C.C.Cowell, J.P.

Aldermen S.G. Deed, E.C. Dines, J.P., G.W. Free, J.P.
S.G. Tydeman, J.P.

Councillors J.E.A. Belcher, W. Binder, Mrs. E.F.M.Brewster,
D. Brierley, D.R. Cargill, Mrs. J.M. Clarke, S.J.Collins,
A.E. Edwards, D.C. Fenn, Mrs. D. Hale, S.Hardy-King, D.Lewsey,
D.T.K. Tonkin, W.R. Woollings, C. Thurston,

OFFICERS

Clerk to Port Health Authority	...	... K.C. Robertson.
Port Medical Officer of Health	...	... Dr. Joan Mackenzie, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc.
Port Sanitary Inspector	...	... R.A. Hallett, M.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.
Accountant	...	... C.F. Hunt.

To the Mayor, the Aldermen and
the Burgesses
of the
BOROUGH OF MALDON

MR. MAYOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present the following report on the Sanitary condition of the Port of Maldon during 1951.

The Port Sanitary District of Maldon includes the whole of the estuary of the Blackwater and its creeks down to a line drawn southward from the East End of West Mersea Island, and to a line drawn Eastward from the Northern boundary of Tillingham Parish. For about four miles below the town, the river practically dries out at low water. Consequently only a few shallow draught vessels lie at the quays at Maldon or in the canal basin at Heybridge. Deep-sea-going vessels lie as a rule below Osea Island, and discharge their cargoes into lighters or barges. Within the last few years many liners have been laid up in the lower part of the estuary.

The trade of the port consists in:-

(1) A small number of vessels from foreign parts, chiefly laden with timber and fish from the Baltic and Continental Ports.

(2) Coastal traffic has increased bringing cargoes of grain and timber.

(3) A considerable amount of estuarial traffic, chiefly in sailing and motor barges, bringing cement, grain, timber and stone, from London and the Thames Estuary, and Ipswich. A large proportion of these barges visit the various small creeks in the estuary, and as they only remain for one or two tides, it is impossible to keep a record of their movements, or, as a rule, inspect them. Nothing unsatisfactory is known concerning the health of their crews or the sanitary condition of these barges.

AMOUNT OF SHIPPING ENTERING THE PORT DURING THE YEAR

1951.

Table A

		Number. Tonnage.		Number Inspected by the Medical Officer of Health.		Number Reported Defective.	No. of Orders issued.
Foreign	Steamers.	11	5277	Nil	11	Nil	-
	Motor.	34	2749	Nil	34	Nil	-
	Sailing.	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Fishing.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Foreign.		45	3026	Nil	45	Nil	-
Coastwise	Steamers.	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Motor.	55	3362	Nil	41	Nil	-
	Sailing.	55	3033	Nil	32	Nil	-
	Fishing.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Coastwise		110	6395	Nil	73	Nil	-
Total Foreign & Coastwise.		155	14421	Nil	118	Nil	-

II. CHARACTER OF TRADE OF PORT.

- (a) PASSENGER TRAFFIC DURING 1951. Nil.
- (b) CARGO TRAFFIC:
Principal Imports -- Cement, Timber, Wheat, Stone, Live Eels.
Principal Exports -- Wheat.
- (c) FOREIGN PORTS FROM WHICH VESSELS ARRIVE:
White Sea and Baltic Ports, Norway, Rotterdam.

There have been no changes in any of the permanent arrangements which were described in the Annual Report for 1948.

West Mersea Oyster Fisheries.

At West Mersea (part of the Maldon Port Health Authority area) there exists a very extensive oyster fishery trade. This business is carried on by importing young oysters and laying them in the estuary of the Blackwater and its tributaries off West Mersea. When the oysters have developed sufficiently, probably after two or three years, they are lifted in suitable quantities and stored in salt water pits on the seashore at West Mersea. From these pits they are despatched for sale for human consumption.

On the 31st July, 1951, the Clerk of the West Mersea Urban District Council sent a request from his Authority that the Port Health Authority should make an Order under the Public Health (Shellfish) Regulations, 1934, prohibiting the taking or offering for sale of these oysters and that such an Order should be made at once.

The oysters were alleged to be unfit by reason of sewage pollution from houseboats adjacent to the oyster pits and that the Analysts' report on two samples which had been submitted by the West Mersea Urban District Council justified such action. These samples showed that in one case 80% of the oysters were clean and in the other case 66% of the oysters were clean. Certain samples of water from the oyster pits were also examined at the same time and these had varying degrees of pollution.

On the 10th August a joint meeting was held at West Mersea to discuss the whole position. The following people attended this meeting:-

Dr. W.H.Alderton, Medical Officer of Health, West Mersea U.D.C.
E.J.Banner, Esq., Sanitary Inspector, West Mersea U.D.C.
Dr. P.H.Martin, Pathologist, Public Health Laboratory, Ipswich.
Dr. J. Mackenzie, Medical Officer of Health, Maldon Port
Health Authority.
R.A.Hallett, Esq., Sanitary Inspector, Maldon Port Health
Authority.

At this meeting the whole history of the pollution of these oyster pits was discussed and it was learned that the first complaints had originated in 1937. It became obvious from this discussion that to be able to decide as to whether the pits should be prohibited for use or not, a fairly representative series of samples should be taken and judgement passed on the combined results.

Accordingly, over a period of eight weeks, seventeen samples of oysters and thirteen samples of sea water from the pits were submitted for examination.

The percentages of cleanliness of oysters varied from 100% (8 samples) to 60% (one sample, presumptive result only). The average cleanliness was 93.8%. The water samples were free from faecal coliform bacilli in seven cases and the other six samples contained an average of 4.5 (ranging from 2 to 8) bacilli per millilitre of water.

It was also learned that ten samples of oysters had been examined by the authorities at Billingsgate Market over the previous nine months and that the average cleanliness was 89%.

It appears to be the accepted rule that oysters should be 90% clean on sampling to be fit for human consumption, and therefore the samples from West Mersea are not considered unfit for consumption.

In view of this evidence I could not recommend the making of the Order requested by the West Mersea Urban District but I suggested that the oysters and the sea water in the pits should be sampled from time to time in order to keep a check on any increased pollution.

This latter suggestion has been put into practice, but the samples which have been examined have shown no deterioration in the cleanliness of the Oysters.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the officers of the Port Health Authority for their help and co-operation.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOAN MACKENZIE, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc.

